

January 30, 2006
Work Session-Board of Education

Minutes

Members present

Brady Wooten- Chairman
Allen Sneed- Vice- Chairman
Leon Casstevens- Commissioner
Kim Clark Phillips- Commissioner
D.C. Swaim- Commissioner

Others Present

Cecil E. Wood- County Manager
Melinda Vestal-Clerk to the Board
James Graham-County Attorney

Board of Education and other staff members

Karin Mendenhall- Chair, Dr. Hazel Brown, Vice-Chair, Angela Parks, Rex Baity, Frank Brown, Howard McKnight, Brock Matthews, DR. Barbara Todd-Superintendent, Gary McDonald, Asst.Superintendent, Kim Rose, Bonnie Davis, Donald Hawks, Cindy McMurray, Cynthia Russell, Kaky Berry, Sandra Brown, Ricky McCollum, Sara McCall, Jennie, Willie Luffman, Dexter Crater, Anne Willard, Marti Willard, Lucas Gabbard, Tina Love, Miriam Todd and Judy Welborn.

Chair Mendenhall called the Board of Education to order. Chairman Wooten called the Board of Commissioners to order. Mr. McDonald had the invocation. Holly Tilley, 10th grade student at the Success Academy, led the pledge of allegiance.

The Boards thanked Ms. Kaky Berry, Principal, and her staff for hosting the meeting.

Construction Update

Donald Hawks, Maintenance Director, updated the Boards on the construction projects at Starmount and Forbush High Schools.

School needs

Chair Mendenhall stated the Board of Education has met and discussed where to go from here. The Board would like to build two middle schools in the next couple of years. Chair Mendenhall stated the needs of the school are immediate needs. The Board of Education would like to ask for a Bond Referendum in 2007. She stated by then there should be more information on the lottery and the proposed increase on the sales tax. The Board is currently getting cost estimates for two middle schools.

Chairman Wooten asked about the timeline; when does the Board of Education want to present the idea to the community?

Chair Mendenhall stated they want to have plenty of time to get the information out there. They have an anticipated date of late 2006.

Mr. Wood asked if the two middle schools were built, would this take care of the needs on the planning study?

Chair Mendenhall stated the middle schools would help the space issues at the elementary schools and this would delay any major renovations at the elementary schools. This project would satisfy a major need.

Angela Parks, BOE, stated the middle school curriculum is advantageous for the students; more prepared to go to high school.

Chair Mendenhall updated the Boards on the latest information regarding the sales tax.

Mr. Wood discussed Medicaid and how the State is willing to absorb Medicaid costs, but the county would have to give back one cent of the sales tax.

Chairman Wooten asked if the bond passed to construct two middle schools, how long after that would there need to be renovations at the elementary schools?

Chair Mendenhall stated she is not sure, but they would start planning as soon as the middle schools were built.

Chairman Wooten asked how the Board of Education felt about the bond?

Chair Mendenhall stated the Board was very optimistic.

Frank Brown, BOE, stated the Board was working on costs and a plan to promote the bond for a twelve month period.

Commissioner Swaim asked if the bond would be only for the two middle schools?

Frank Brown, BOE, stated the high schools should be in good shape for the next ten years. The cost to build the middle schools would be a nickel increase on the tax rate. He mentioned that the gym floors at both high schools would need to be redone and the elementary schools are in good shape.

Chair Mendenhall stated they would like to present a formal presentation to the Commissioners. When would the presentation best fit your schedule?

Chairman Wooten stated the county too has immediate needs-water/sewer, schools and economic development. We should narrow our focus next week when we meet with David Long.

Frank Brown asked how much money could the county borrow?

Mr. Wood stated the county could carry a debt in the low \$30 millions.

Frank Brown asked if the bond passed, could you wait to borrow the money?

Mr. Wood stated a bond vote is good for seven years.

Dr. Hazel Brown stated two middle schools could be built in 2008. This would take the burden off the elementary schools.

The Boards discussed development in the county and the effect it has on the schools.

Brock Matthews, BOE, stated the county should work with the Board of Education when new development comes to the county.

Mr. Wood asked about the availability of water and sewer at the high schools.

Donald Hawks, Maintenance Director, discussed water and sewer at the high schools.

Commissioner Sneed suggested building one middle school in the most critical area.

The Boards discussed building structures; brick or steel.

Dr. Todd stated as long as it is approved by DPI (Department of Public Instruction).

Budget Needs

Dr. Todd stated the State is in the early phases of the budget process. She commented the budget is proposing a 3% increase and step increases for teachers.

Chairman Wooten inquired about staffing.

Dr. Todd stated depends on the number of classes the State requires; usually 1-3 new teachers per year.

Mr. Wood asked about capital needs.

The Board of Education discussed the upkeep of the buildings, underground tanks and gym floor replacement at the high schools.

Chairman Wooten asked how the high costs of fuel and energy affected the schools' budgets?

Dr. Todd stated there has not been a lot of difference since the schools went to Energy Management.

Chairman Wooten asked about the promotion of the bonds. Would the BOE use an outside agency?

Chair Mendenhall stated it's too costly; depend mostly on donations.

Commissioner Phillips commented on the resolution to make school campuses tobacco-free. She stated the Board of Commissioners voted to make all public buildings smoke-free. She stated there needs to be designated smoking areas; not right in front of the door. This step could be in the right direction on passing the bond.

Chair Mendenhall stated the BOE has discussed the resolution. They have also surveyed the employees, but have not tallied the findings. She stated the schools already have a no smoking policy for the students. This resolution is for all events at the schools (outside and inside). Chair Mendenhall questioned how to enforce the policy. The BOE has not taken any action at this time.

Angela Parks, BOE, stated the enforcement is a big concern; who does the enforcing? She has been told if this passes there will not be any support for the schools. She agrees with designated smoking areas.

Bonnie Davis discussed the tobacco-free resolution.

Commissioner Phillips commented on the smoking at the main doors and how people have to walk through the smoke to get inside the building.

The Boards discussed the tobacco free resolution and enforcement.

Kaky Berry, Principal of the Success Academy, reviewed what the Success Academy does for students.

Commissioner Sneed reported on the EMS stations.

Adjournment/Recess

*Commissioner Sneed made the motion to recess the meeting until February 1st at 9:00 a.m. Commissioner Casstevens seconded. The Board voted 5-0.

*Brock Matthews made the motion to adjourn for the BOE. Angela Parks seconded. Vote was unanimous.

Melinda Vestal, Clerk to the Board